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## Group Disputes Quarry Expansion

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A contractor's request to expand its quarry operations in Parleys Canyon has gained the approval of Salt Lake County -- and drawn protests from environmentalists.

Harper Contracting, based in Kearns, was given permission by the Planning Commission last month to nearly triple the size of the 20-acre quarry -- located about two miles up the canyon -- to 56 acres.

But Save Our Canyons (SOC), a Wasatch Front environmental organization, has appealed the decision to the Board of Adjustment, claiming the county has violated its own zoning ordinances. The appeal will be heard Wednesday at 2 p.m.

"The zoning says mineral extraction is allowed, but rock quarries do not fall under that category," said SOC spokesman Tom Stephens. "They're definitely not living up to the spirit of the [zoning] ordinance and they probably aren't living up to the wording of the ordinance. We fundamentally disagree that this is a mineral extraction."

However, County Planning Director Cal Schneller says the ordinance is sufficiently broad to include a rock quarry.

"It fits within the mineral-extraction category of the zone," Schneller said. "They're going on a strict geological interpretation and technically they're right. But this does fit under the umbrella of the ordinance."

The quarry, located on the north side of the canyon, has been a Parleys fixture since the 1920s. It sat idle during most of the 1980s, but was brought back to working life seven years ago by Harper Contracting.

Lawnie Mayhew, the company's environmental services director, says the quarry expansion request is not huge, given the amount of property Harper Contracting owns at the site. He also calls it a first step in eventually closing the quarry and remediating the site.

"We came in under the original mining plan, in an area that was being mined already," Mayhew said. "We've tried to come up with a plan that's acceptable" and that will ensure the site is "reclaimed properly."

But that, he noted, is "two or three lifetimes" down the road.

Mayhew also insists the quarry expansion will not be that

noticeable from Interstate 80.

"I doubt a casual observer will notice that it's much bigger than anything we're doing right now," he said.

But SOC's Stephens isn't buying that argument.

"The quarry has become visually unaesthetic, and we think most commuters would agree with that," he said. "You can see the berms from the freeway, which are there to protect motorists from rockfall. On top of the berms they've got this primitive fencing to catch the small projectiles. It is not pleasant to look at."

Schneller says the county planning staff's approval of the quarry expansion was based, to a large degree, on the endorsement Harper received from the state Division of Oil, Gas and Mining. He expects the Board of Adjustment to uphold the county's decision.

"If the Board of Adjustment rules against our appeal, we'll look very closely at their reasoning," Stephens warned. "If it's not substantiated by law, we'll seriously consider legal action."

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